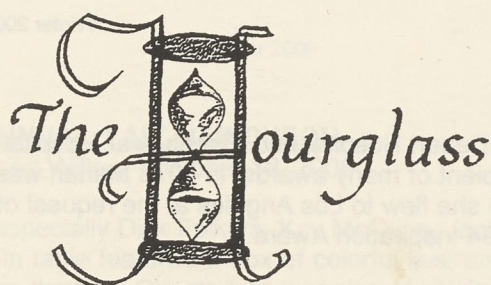


# Historical Society of Palm Desert

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Community

Service

Collections

Archives

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## MARIAN MARSH HENDERSON

### Beauty in the Desert

Compiled from Society archives by Ginny Folkers

Baby girl Violet Krauth was born in Trinidad, British West Indies on October 17, 1913. When she was four years old the family of six migrated to the United States and settled in Boston, where her father set up his chocolate manufacturing business. With her mother and three siblings, Violet traveled across the country during World War I and settled in Long Beach where she attended Hollywood High School. She first visited the desert in the late 1920s, vacationing at the El Mirador Hotel in Palm Springs. With her brother, Tony, she would hike the canyons and mountains, ride horses, and water ski at the Salton Sea.

Violet's big sister became an actress, taking the name of Jeanne Morgan. This lovely girl was chosen the most beautiful in the United States by a top Hollywood producer. Little sister tagged along with Jeanne, and at the age of sixteen she took a bit part in the Howard Hughes' epic *Hells Angels*. It was at this point that the young actress took the name of Marilyn Morgan. After that she and Howard sometimes dated when they were in the desert. In Hughes' white Cord convertible, they would drive the roadless sand to an elegant restaurant with back-room gambling on Date Palm Drive. Her brothers would have to tow them back to Palm Springs because the Cord had a habit of breaking down.

John Barrymore noticed her lovely voice quality and diction. It was in the 1930s that Marian became well known beginning with the role of young Trilby, who was mesmerized by the hypnotist *Svengali* played by Barrymore. When her beautiful face started appearing in movie magazines she became known as Marian Marsh, her permanent stage name. Her second movie *The Mad Genius* featured the same leading man. While still in her teens, she was one of the first to join the Screen Actors Guild; also, she was the first American actress to make films in England. Marian continued making movies with some of Hollywood's leading stars throughout the 1930s, more than 40 productions.

Then in 1938 she married stock broker Albert Scott and had a daughter, Cathy, and a son, Albert Jr. The lovely Marian stepped down from most of her work in movies and theater in 1952 to raise her children. This 5' 2" bundle of energy founded a community beautification group in Chatsworth. She was also involved in Rancho San Antonio, a school for boys in trouble -- hiring 35 of the boys and encouraging other ranchers to do the same. Marian also established housekeeping and grooming classes for the Home for Girls. After nineteen years the Scotts decided to divorce in the late 1950s. In 1959 she did two television spots before marrying Cliff Henderson.

In 1960 Marian married the founding father of Palm Desert and became Marian Marsh Henderson. At this time the Shadow Mountain Club was the rising star in the social venue of Palm Desert. The beautiful Marian stepped right into the role of No. 1 Hostess, but that didn't slow her down in community activities and environmental concerns.



When pilot Jacqueline Cochran complained about all the trash she saw in the desert while flying over it, Marian thought of her past experience in Chatsworth. So in 1962 *Desert Beautiful* became a reality, encompassing more than 15 Coachella Valley communities. She believed there was no reason for "visual pollution", so with a group of loyal volunteers she began removing the litter from the valley floor. They concentrated on clean up/repair/paint, and plant trees/flowers. Local youngsters participated too, and were educated in conservation with art and essay contests. Commercial people worked hard to earn the beautification awards presented annually. Besides removing abandoned vehicles, Marian was instrumental in stopping the burning of trash, in the installation of recycling depots, and in arranging for two free residential pick-ups each year. Mrs. Henderson worked tirelessly on the *Desert Beautiful* project for 35 years until her health went into decline.



Marian Henderson (continued)

Marian served on the boards of Desert Hospital and Eisenhower Hospital for 11 years. From 1972 to 1978 she was also on the United Way board. The recipient of many awards, in 1973 Marian was one of three ladies honored by the Palm Springs Chamber of Commerce, in 1993 she flew to Los Angeles at the request of a group dedicated to showing and preserving old films, and she was given the 1994 Inspiration Award.

Her most enduring dream was that there would be lighted palms along the highway from the ocean to the Salton Sea...that's 52 miles! Other expressed wishes were to return to the times of good behavior, well dressed people, and not having to lock doors. Before pursuing her film career, Marian had a strong desire to become a nurse. She would have been a success in that venue too -- she had a wonderful bedside manner.

Cliff and Marian traveled every year to see the Olympics. They also attended functions all over the world sponsored by the many aviation organizations of which Cliff was a member. Being a first hand eye-witness to her husband's loyalty and effort concerning the growth and development of the initial stages of Palm Desert, Marian doggedly stood her ground in seeing that he was given the credit that he deserved. With his vision and her backing, Palm Desert has become the city in which we are all proud to live and work.

Marian died in her home on Pinyon Street in Palm Desert on November 9, 2006, following several years of deteriorating health. She is survived by her daughter Cathy of Arkansas, and by her son Albert of Colorado; eight grandchildren and seven great-grandchildren. On November 16 a funeral mass took place at Sacred Heart Catholic Church, the church Marian attended during her 46 years in the desert.

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Marian Marsh Henderson Memorial Fund

Part of this fund will be used by special request of the family. A "Desert Beautiful" plant and commemorative plaque will be added to our grounds during a dedication ceremony followed by an informal memorial.

The Society will be happy to set up a fund for any deceased member.  
It is an enduring way for family and friends to remember a loved one,  
and to keep their presence in Palm Desert's history.

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DECEASED MEMBERS

Martin "Marty" McKell - Marty was an only child, raised in Boston and joined the navy upon graduation from high school. During his 21-year military career, he married Willa Ruth, a marriage that lasted 58 years. In 1965 he became Chairman of the Business Dept. at C.O.D. and retired in 1985 as Professor Emeritus. An active member of many local organizations, he was involved with People-to-People, and with the International Society of Magicians for over 50 years.

Oscar HurleyArthur HelblingBOB & CAROLYN GREEN LEAVE THE DESERT

On October 6th the Society hosted a farewell party for the Greens at Civic Center Park. They moved to Washington state to be closer to their children. Our main exhibit at the Firehouse "Firefighting: Tools of the Trade" was made possible by the fantastic collection of firefighting equipment amassed by the Greens. They left our display in tact, and took the remainder of their museum with them in many, many loads to their new rural home. A barbeque dinner was enjoyed by friends of the Greens thanks to hard-working volunteers of the Historical Society. These two wonderful people have been sorely missed since their departure to a cooler (but wetter) climate.

NEW MEMBERSContributing:

Sabby & Wendy Jonathan  
Tom Cavanaugh & Susanne Cho  
Ed & Linda Morante  
Paul & Mary Kay Berlier

Family:

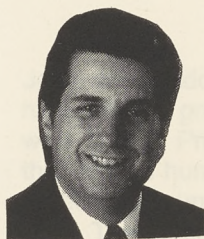
Paul & Mary Maloney  
Bob & Jane Osborn

Individual:

Nancy O'Hara



**ANNUAL FALL LUNCHEON**  
Desert Willow - October 18, 2006



Many thanks to the committee, especially Dick Folkers, Kay McCune, Jackie Damron, and Anne Tuttle for a delightful experience. The sign-in table featured a box of colorful leis, and the centerpieces on each table were a colorful array of Hawaiian themes. Guests had a choice of chicken breast or grilled salmon salads and an exotic dessert was served. Our speaker was Ted Giatas, the President / CEO of the McCallum Theatre. He gave some historical background including heart throbs and headaches over the passing years. Some research in Society archives revealed the impact Mr. Giatas has had on the theatre since he was hired in 1999. There are wonderful plans for the future too. Thanks to you, Ted.

**Bob Hope Cultural Center**  
**McCALLUM THEATRE FOR THE PERFORMING ARTS**  
**73000 Fred Waring Drive**

Timeline from Society archives by V. Folkers, Curator

- 1966 A \$250,000 bequest from the estate of Pearl McCallum McManus, Dr. Roy McCall had set aside the southwest quadrant of the College of the Desert property for a cultural center.
- 73/74 Fred Waring gave \$2500 to the building fund from 13 local concerts he conducted.
- 74 Frank Sinatra raised \$60,000 in one benefit concert
- 74 Friends of the Cultural Center was formed to raise building money - raised \$814,215 in 10 years.
- 77 Friends close office - bad press and building at EMC dried up donations
- 78 Terry Green joined C.O.C. faculty, liked theater idea - not large cultural center plans - needed to determine the need for cultural arts in the desert - he starts the ball rolling
- 80 Ernie Hahn took a 5-year lease option, \$1127
- 80 Palm Desert renamed Avenue 44 to Fred Waring Drive
- 2-84 Ernie Hahn, builder of the Palm Desert Town Center, realized that it would take well-known personalities to bring large donations for a theater, talked Bob Hope into using his name. He announced the Bob Hope Cultural Center was going to be built; he started out by bidding with a million and got other affluent people to follow suit. Hahn stayed with the project. Many benefits were sponsored by various people.
- 85 Michael Grossman supervised construction - opened \$5 million in debt
- 12-3-87 Opening of Bob Hope Cultural Center, guests: Pres. & Mrs. Reagan
- 12-28-87 Desert Press Preview Party
- 1-2-88 Opening of McCallum Theatre, Honorable & Mrs. Walter Annenberg performance: America At Its Finest - dinner, dancing. Michael Grossman became director.
- 10-26-88 McCallum Theatre: A Jewel in the Desert. Primarily financed by private funds -- no tax dollars, no government subsidies, no bond issues -- loan at \$4.5 million. 1166 seats at \$17,000 per seat. Director: Nancy Dolensek
- 2-23-89 Elizabeth Taylor receives second annual Hope Award
- 5-14-94 "Troopers": 75 volunteers take care of the everyday duties; Joan Curci, founder, in 1989.
- 3-16-95 Fund-raising party at the home of Joseph & Dee Wambaugh
- 4-28-95 "End of Season" luncheon
- 12-27-95 Founders & Guests party - entertainment, cuisine by desert's leading chefs
- 6-14-96 Theatre gets grant: \$300,000 from City of Palm Desert / \$50,000 from Indian Wells = raises a few concerned brows. Gerald Ford praises the two cities
- Several McCallum administrators were involved in an illegal pyramid scheme.
- 6-15-96 Palm Desert City Council gives \$850,000 in grants and loans in a closed session
- 6-21-96 Summer ticket sales slow
- 9-14-96 Doug Hosner hired as in-house market director.
- 9-26-96 An inventive Jim Anderson runs the sound-mixing console as Audio/Video Director at the theatre
- 11-14-96 Southern California Edison's total gifts are \$57,000
- 11-20-96 Antonia Graphos, Board President, becomes leader of management team
- 12-96 Three men write checks to balance budget for end of 1996
- 12-23-96 Michele Moore hired as development coordinator
- 97-98 10 Anniversary = tickets cover only 60% of expenses



McCallum Theatre (continued):

- 1-9-97 Audit: theatre financially troubled because of past sloppy record keeping and lax accounting, scandal further erodes public support.
- 1-10-97 Palm Desert City Council votes 3-2 for a secured loan of \$500,000 for the theatre
- 6-14-97 Palm Desert gives another \$40,000
- 12-17-97 Palm Desert gives \$25,000 for 10th anniversary gala
- 12-30-97 Education program formed with four local school districts with a teachers' workshop
- 10-3-98 2nd annual Bowling for Bucks fund-raiser
- 98/99 20% ticket discount offered for groups of 20 or more
- 1-31-99 300 volunteers, with a waiting list, seniors mostly; volunteers are recruited every other year, would like to have some younger people
- 10-1-99 Ted Giatas assumes executive director position; formerly with Midland Center for the Arts in Michigan. Masters: Pennsylvania State University in education (&) Bachelors: University of Massachusetts in music.
- 1-01 Theatre is on the verge of closing. Since opening it has had a \$1 million annual budget shortfall.
- 1-12-01 Theatre asks Palm desert for a one-time \$5 million grant; it is part of \$15 million endowment = \$5 million from W. Annenberg & Berger Foundation, and \$5 million from fund-raising. Gerald R. Ford is consistently behind the McCallum Theatre.
- 6-18-01 A \$5 million lease agreement is made with Palm Desert Redevelopment Agency
- 2-2-03 Places used before McCallum Theatre was built: hangar at the Bermuda Dunes Airport, Palm Springs High School gymnasium, and the C.O.D. gymnasium in the 1960s -- acoustics were bad - for Fred Waring concerts.
- 2-2-03 Rancho Mirage offers McCallum Theatre \$50,000 annually for 5 years for operating expenses.
- 2-6-03 15th anniversary gala
- 5-23-03 "Open Call" amateur talent contest
- 7-12-03 Theatre seeks younger audiences with contemporary acts; theatre is ranked 12th in the nation for smaller venues by Pollstar
- 1-29-04 Backstage "Behind the Scenes" tours are available - it is a free program conducted by volunteer docents - a 1-1/2 hour excursion
- 3-30-04 Theatre is debt-free
- 4-15-04 Theatre is ranked 8th in the nation for ticket sales from January through March
- 2-19-06 Dream of expansion: two more theaters: 2,500 seat and a 350 seat "black box" added to the existing building, and a parking structure ---- projected cost \$80 to \$100 million
- 4-20-06 Ted Giatas: Founders contributed \$34 million since he was hired in 1999, number of Founders increased from 166 to 306 during his tenure
- 6-14-06 McCallum Theatre Institute was started in 1997, offers youth programs in performing arts. Theatre has 61 full and part-time employees (and) 425 volunteers.

DONATIONS

Geraldine Hart - gave the Society 3 items for the paper archive, and 9 items for future exhibits. Donald, her husband worked in maintenance at College of the Desert beginning back in the 1960s. Two of their sons were volunteer firemen who were stationed at our historic firehouse.

Many thanks to Yvonne Henderson Riddell for giving us the Modesto address for Gene Conrotto.

ANNUAL YARD SALE

This year's fund-raiser grossed almost \$7,000. Thank you to everyone who donated items for us to sell and to those who set it up. We always enjoy the comradery that comes of working together for an extended time -- this event is, however, an extremely work-intensive project. If you have ever set up a garage sale, you know this is true. For the men who pick up and store heavy furniture the job involves year-long effort; and for a small group of our dedicated members, a yard sale results in an exhausting week of sorting, pricing and displaying everything that has been donated.

The Board of Directors has decided to call a special meeting on December 13 at 2:00 p.m. to brain-storm about the yard sale and any other ways that the Society can raise money for the operation of the museum. We invite you to present comments and suggestions to Anne Tuttle by calling the office at 346-6588. Be assured that the Directors will give consideration to each and every suggestion that you submit. This is just one of the ways you can contribute to the ongoing work we do in preserving the history of Palm Desert. Maybe some fund-raiser you remember from years ago will work splendidly for us in 2007 and beyond.



### **INFORMATION MEETING**

Jean Ernst has scheduled a meeting for all members and volunteers at the Firehouse.  
Tuesday, December 5th, at 2:30 p.m.

Everyone is encouraged to attend and become familiar with the displays and archives.

### **MINI - MUSTER**

John and Madonna Marman, who coordinate this annual project to teach local third-graders the intricacies of fire safety have done a great job! This is the primary out-reach of the Society to local children, and it involves a major effort by those who chair it. Prior to the Marmans taking over, Dan and Bj Callahan did the work. This year five schools participated, and that equals hundreds of youngsters. The coordination of the Desert Sands Unified School District, many firemen from the Riverside County Fire Department, a number of Society volunteers, and Palms-to-Pines Rotarians is a formidable task in itself. The up-shot of it all is that our young citizens learn what to do if fire should break out where they happen to be at any particular time. Firemen have told us that over the 15 years that the Society has sponsored this event, lives have been saved because of our efforts. The kids are "ambassadors" -- they teach what they have been taught to friends, family, etc.

### **SISTER CITY TOUR OF THE SOCIETY**

by Dick Folkers, President

On Thursday morning, November 9, several dignitaries from Gisborne, New Zealand visited our museum as part of the City's Sister City Committee event. Mr. Meng Foon, mayor of the Gisborne District Council, and his wife were present, along with some of the Council members and their wives. Bob Elliott, the District Council executive, and his wife also attended. Besides the museum tour and refreshments, the group saw portions of the binder from March 1992 when Dick and Ginny Folkers visited Gisborne for a month as part of the exchange program. During that trip they learned about engineering, administrative highlights, the museum, library and cultural achievements of the Gisborne District Council.

### **VIDEOS RECOMMENDED FOR VISITORS**

#### **Palm Desert - from Dream to Reality - 15 minutes**

Local history from pre-World War II, the war years, Palm Village, Shadow Mountain, the Henderson brothers

#### **Palm Desert - A City in the Sand - 20 minutes**

Growth and changes: early buildings, date ranches, Desert Air Park, Andy the Donkey Man, Keedy's market in 1946, Portola library, Palm Desert Elementary School, first churches, country clubs, Firecliff Lodge, first businesses on El Paseo. Film ends with current photos of places.

#### **Fire Fighters - 25 minutes**

Life and work of a firefighter in the New York City Fire Department - made in 1991

#### **Marian Marsh Henderson - 25 minutes**

Early life as a movie star, clips of films with John Barrymore and others. Her beauty outshone her action.  
Interview of Marian telling about meeting Cliff Henderson, marriage, start of Desert Beautiful in 1962.

### **BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING SUMMARY**

By Dick Folkers, President

- 1) The September Board meeting agenda was discussed -- a quorum was not present at that meeting.
- 2) Finances discussed: we have three accounts at Palm Desert National Bank. The Money Market interest dropped, so we are going to a short-term C.D. instead.
- 3) We received nice comments on the "Good Bye" party for Bob and Carolyn Green. They have really been an asset on the school tours and Mini-Muster. They will be greatly missed.
- 4) Board members will be acting as usher for the Navy Jazz Band "Commadores" performance on Friday evening, November 11, at the Civic Center Amphitheater.
- 5) The Spring Luncheon in April 2007 was discussed as to location and program.
- 6) Various fund-raiser ideas were voiced and a meeting set for Dec. 13 to fully discuss the matter.
- 7) More publicity will be considered for the future. John Hussar and Piper Close, who both have experience in this specialized area, will be interviewed.
- 8) Possible future locations and/or expansion of the Society and Museum was discussed.
- 9) The Board will be working on the fiscal year budget for 2007-2008 starting in December. We need to submit it to the City in early Spring of 2007.



**UP-COMING EVENTS**

12-2006	2nd grade School Tours	4 classes	Ronald Reagan School
12-7-06, Tuesday	Volunteer Information meeting	all are invited	Firehouse, 2:30 p.m.
1-14-96, Sunday	Golf Cart Parade		El Paseo
1-26-07, Friday	Lecture: Contemporary Salton Sea	Carol Hann	Firehouse, 7 p.m., \$5.00
2-17-07, Saturday	Seminar: Hiking for Health & Wellness	Philip Ferranti	Firehouse, 9am-4pm, \$45
2-23-07, Friday	Lecture: Ollaman: Reviving a Lost Art	Tony Soares	Firehouse, 7 p.m., \$5.00
3-7-07, Wednesday	Lecture: History of Palm Desert	Hal Rover	P. D. Library, 2 p.m.
3-23-07, Friday	Lecture: M. South & Ghost Mt. Chron.	Diana Lindsay	Firehouse, 7 p.m., \$5.00
3-25-07, Sunday	Ed Mullins "Picnic in the Park"	Historical Society	C.C. Park, 11 am, Lunch 12
4-18-07, Wednesday	Society's Spring Luncheon	Historical Society	Social 11am, Lunch 12
4-21-07, Saturday	Public Safety Festival	City of Palm Desert	Civic Center Park
4-27-07, Friday	Lecture: The Bradshaw Trail	Reda Anderson	Firehouse, 7 p.m., \$5.00
5-19-07, Saturday	Founder's Day & Palm Awards	Historical Society	City Hall, 2-4 pm

**Timely Thoughts****By Ivan Munson (Indio's Pioneer Jeweler)**

\* Sign in supermarket: "Chicken - 20 cents a pound. Our coop runneth over."

\* No, we don't live within our income. It's all we can do to live within our credit.

\* These days, anyone who's managed to earn enough money to go to college doesn't need the education.

\* Experience is what you have left over after you've pulled the boner.

\* A perfectionist is a person who takes enough pains to give everyone else one.

- Palm Desert Post, Feb. 26, 1976

Hourglass editors,  
Dick & Ginny Folkers

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